

Did you know Georgia has a professional softball team?

In our ongoing commitment to women's sports, we are happy to bring you information about a professional women's team here in Atlanta. The club is Women's Professional Fastpitch (WPF) and the team in Atlanta is "Georgia Pride".

Women's Professional Fastpitch (WPF) was created to provide elite fastpitch athletes with the opportunity to compete at the professional level, and to provide affordably priced entertainment for the entire family.

WPF launched a league of their own in June. The league consists of six teams located in the southeast region of the United States. Teams will be located in Atlanta; Charlotte, N.C.; Tampa, Fla.; Orlando, Fla.; Raleigh/Durham, N.C.; and Hampton/Newport News, Va. Expansion of the league is planned to encompass the entire United States.

Some facts about fastpitch:

- Fastpitch was a medal sport in the 1996 Olympic Games, which was won by the United States in front of record-setting crowds.
- The United States has won gold medals in 6 of the last 8 World Championships.
- Softball, including slowpitch and fastpitch, is the #1 participation team sport in the United States with more than 40 million players.
- Over 7 million girls from 7 to 17 years of age play softball.
- Over 15,000 high schools have softball programs.
- Over 1,300 collegiate softball programs exist.
- There are more than 250,000 high school varsity and 28,000 college fastpitch athletes.
- More than 60.6% of all softball players are between 18 and 44 years of age.
- Softball is one of the few sports in America which has achieved near parity in the number of men and women participating.

League play consists of a 72-game schedule, with 36 home games and 36 road games during June, July and August.

League play will be followed by a championship series. All-Stars from the league will be chosen for a post-season contest, "The International Challenge." This contest, billed as the first, true world series, will be a match-up between WPF All-Stars and a team from one of 83 countries that currently play fastpitch.

In high schools and colleges across the country, fastpitch is for female athletes what baseball is for male athletes. WPF teams will consist of 15 players each, WPF's first draft was in October 1995. The professional fastpitch roster includes athletes from small towns to big cities, coast to coast.

The WPF talent pool currently includes more than 250,000 high school varsity and 28,000 college fastpitch athletes, as well as Olympic team members.

It is important for us as well as our daughters that we support women's sports. Please plan on following this team and participate as you can.

Support women sports reporters and media coverage of women's sports.

Similarly, you can call the media to task when they do not cover women's sports or do not have female reporters.

For more information about Georgia Pride contact them at:

Georgia Pride
5845 Hillvale Road
Lithonia, Ga. 30058
(770) 981-9696

What you can do:

The media is vital to creating change.

- Encourage reporters to cover women's athletics in your area.
- Never hesitate to contact the media and make them aware of actions, workshops, or other activities.
- Local radio and TV talk shows should also be encouraged to devote programs to women's athletics.

Atlanta Welcomes *In the Life Atlanta*, Black Gay Pride '97

"Are you in the life?" During the Harlem Renaissance, this was the slang term homosexuals used to find each other. This tradition will live on in Atlanta over the Labor Day weekend when *In the Life Atlanta*, also known as Black Gay Pride, comes to the Sheraton Colony Square Hotel and other downtown venues.

The theme this year is "Free to Be Me," and a host of activities will welcome black gays and lesbians from around the country to Atlanta for this special event.

The festivities will kick off on Thursday, Aug. 28, with a candle-light vigil in the park across from the Martin Luther King Center. The vigil is to show support for people living with all types of diseases, from AIDS to psychological disorders.

Friday night an opening reception will take place at the Colony Square Hotel on Peachtree St.

Saturday brings the cultural arts festival beginning at 9 a.m. and lasting all day. Special break-out sessions, or "brother raps" and "sister raps," will be held to give

In the Life: A slang expression originated during the Harlem Renaissance, meaning gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

folks who are interested in having intellectual discussions about politics and social issues a chance to get together with other men or women. Then, from midnight to 1:30 a.m., six poets will get together for an erotic poetry slam.

On Sunday, an ecumenical worship service will be held, featuring leaders from several different faiths, including Christian, Buddhist and Jewish leaders. That afternoon, a "Family Reunion" picnic will take place at Perkerson Park in southwest Atlanta.

On Monday, a casual game day/card party will wind down the festivities, giving people a chance to say goodbye.

Last year about 40,000 gay and lesbian brothers and sisters turned out for the now annual event.

The planning committee for *In the Life Atlanta* meets every Wednesday night at 7:30 p.m. at the Atlanta Lambda Center, 828 West Peachtree St., Suite 207, to organize. Those wanting to get involved or just learn more about this year's festival should call the Pride Line at (404) 872-6410.

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